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INTRODUCTION.

“The Story Poems” contain selections from well-known authors, namely, Matthew Arnold, Tennyson, Coleridge, Longfellow, Scott and Goldsmith. They are not in all cases representative pieces of these authors. It would indeed be a difficult proceeding to pick out or select a representative passage in the case of a particular author. The fact, however, that each piece is written by an author of reputation ensures its genuine and literary merit. For example, Matthew Arnold was not only a poet, but also a critic, essayist, lecturer and educationist. Arnold himself described poetry as the criticism of life and his chief masters were the Greek epic, dramatic and elegiac writers, Goethe and Wordsworth. His philosophy of poetry is that the good in life may be reached and held fast not by external aids, but by insight and by moral vigour. His “Sohrab and Rustam” is the story of a great chieftain who slays his son in single combat, each unknown to the other until the fatal wound has been given. It is written in blank verse and is inspired by a passionate pathos; which is preserved with a dignity sustained throughout. *Cf.* :—

“So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead !
And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak
Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.
All those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd
By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear.

His house, now mid broken flights of steps
Lie prone, enormous down the mountain-side—
So in the sand lay Rostum by his son."

On the other hand Tennyson was essentially a poet, and perhaps one of the greatest poets of the Nineteenth Century. According to his own account he wrote verses at the age of eight, an epic at the age of twelve, and at the age of fourteen a drama in blank verse. The earliest volume of his poems did not create a very great impression. Critics were then too conventional and too conservative. No one indeed then recognised the wonderful influence he was bound to exert on succeeding generations. This influence was due to his power of expression, the perfection of his workmanship, his strong common-sense, the high purport of his life and work, his humility, and his open-hearted and helpful sympathy. His keen and aciding interest in religious and ethical problems is shown throughout his work. The Arthurian romance, for example, is a great connected poem dealing with the very highest interests of man, and King Arthur may be said to be typical of the higher soul of man. Tennyson was fondest of reading aloud "Guinevere" and "The passing of Arthur".

" But when that moan had past for evermore,
"The stillness of the dead worlds winter dawn
Amazed him, and he groan'd ' The King is gone'. .
And therewithal came on him the weird rhyme,
' From the great deep to the great deep he goes."

Coleridge is a fascinating figure in English Literature. He may be described as myriad minded. He

was poet, journalist and critic, lecturer, philosopher and divine. Art for art's sake did not satisfy him, and his great desire was to teach and to preach. He endeavoured to elaborate a new system of philosophy, and though he failed in his object, yet he has been largely instrumental in deepening and widening religious thought within and without the pale of the churches.

It is commonly held that Coleridge wrote a few poems, half a dozen more or less, of supreme excellence, and that he did no more. Amongst these must be numbered "The Ancient Mariner". His peculiar quality as a poet lay in his power of visualizing scenes of which neither he nor another had any actual experience. *Cf.* :—

" Her lips were red, her looks were free.
Her locks were yellow as gold ;
Her skin was white as leprosy,
The Night Mare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

There is a great difference between Coleridge and Wordsworth. As a poet Coleridge taught us little and as a poet Wordsworth was essentially a teacher. The magic and melody, however, of Coleridge's verse are all his own.

Longfellow was the best loved of America's poets and also the best known abroad. A good portion of his life was spent in academic work for which he had little relish. His greater poems are "The Courtship of Miles Stardish", "Evangeline" and "Hiawatha". There is a large number of minor poems, many of

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which are included in his complete works under general titles such as "Tales of a Wayside Inn". One of these is "King Robert of Sicily"; and it brings out Longfellow's dramatic talent and his dialogue. Some of the minor poems also have become universally popular, and every school-boy knows "The Village Blacksmith" and "The Wreck of the Hesperus". Longfellow is remarkable for his gentleness and reverence, his sympathy and kindness, and especially for a life which was related to its poetical expression "As perfect music unto noble words".

Sir Walter Scott first sprang into fame on the publication of his "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border", which were followed by "The Lay of the Last Minstrel", "The Lady of the Lake" and "Marmion". Later on appeared "Rokeby" and "The Lord of the Isles". Great as Scott's reputation as a poet was at that time, he became still more famous as the author of the Waverley novels. From a purely literary point of view Scott may not now be reckoned as great poet, but as a novelist he easily soars into the first rank. In addition the honesty and nobility of his life, and his heroic endeavour to pay off his creditors when the financial crash of the Constable and Ballantyne firms involved him in hopeless ruin, have endeared him not only to all literateurs but to all human beings.

"Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field" is something more than a romantic story. It is an accurate and solid picture of a historical period. Its popularity was amazing, and it took possession of the public like a kind of madness. The lines not only clung to the memory, but they would not keep off the tongue.

People could not help shouting them in solitary places and muttering them as they walked about the streets. Some of it, especially the battle scene, was actually composed while he was galloping on his charger over Portobello sands during his volunteer exercises.

“ He saw the wreck his rashness wrought :
Reckless of life, he desperate fought ;
And fell on Flodden plain .
And well in death his trusty brand,
Firm clinch'd within his manly hand,
Beseem'd the Monarch slain ”

The position of Goldsmith in letters is undoubtedly high. As an essayist he ranks with the best ; as a poet, he produced some of the most enduring work of his generation ; he wrote a novel of which the reputation is cosmopolitan ; and, of his two plays one is not only a masterpiece, but a masterpiece which modern managers still find a charm to conjure with. He was past thirty before he had printed a line worth reaping, and he lived but fifteen years longer. His positive legacy is of rare value. Two excellent didactic and descriptive poems, some admirable occasional verse, many essays of signal merit, a novel that is still praised, namely, “ The Vicar of Wakefield ”, and a comedy that is still acted, namely “ She Stoops to Conquer ”. They are all animated by the same gentle and affectionate nature ; display the same kindly humour ; the same compassionate indulgence for poor humanity, and they are written in the same clear, graceful and unaffected style.

T. F. O'DONNEL, MAJOR,
Principal, Agra College.

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM.

(FROM SHAHNAMEA.)

AND the first grey of morning fill'd the east,
And the fog rose out of the Oxus stream.
But all the Tartar camp along the stream
Was hush'd, and still the men were plunged in sleep ;
Sohrab alone, he slept not : all night long
He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed ;
But when the grey dawn stole into his tent,
He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword,
And took his horseman's cloak, and left his tent,
And went abroad into the cold wet fog,
Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's tent.

Through the black Tartar tents he pass'd, which stood
Clustering like bee-hives on the low flat strand
Of Oxus, where the summer floods o'erflow
When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere :
Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er that low strand,
And to a hillock came, a little back
From the stream's brink, the spot where first a boat,
Crossing the stream in summer, sorapes the land.
The men of former times had crown'd the top .
With a clay fort : but that was fall'n ; and now
The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,
A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.

And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood
 Upon the thick-pil'd carpets in the tent,
 And found the old man sleeping on his bed
 Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.
 And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step
 Was dull'd ; for he slept light, an old man's sleep ;
 And he rose quickly on one arm, and said :—

‘ Who art thou ? for it is not yet clear dawn.
 Speak ! is there news, or any night alarm ? ’

But Sohrab came to the bedside, and said :—
 ‘ Thou know'st me, Peran-Wisa : it is I.
 The sun is not yet risen, and the foe
 Sleep ; but I sleep not ; all night long I lie
 Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.
 For so did King Afrasiab bid me seek
 Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,
 In Samarcand, before the army march'd :
 And I will tell thee what my heart desires.
 Thou knowest if, since from Ader-baijan first
 I came among the Tartars, and bore arms,
 I have still serv'd Afrasiab well, and shown,
 At my boy's years, the courage of a man.
 This too thou know'st, that, while I still bear on
 The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,
 And beat the Persians back on every field,
 I seek one man, one man, and one alone—
 Rustum, my father ; who, I hop'd, should greet,
 Should one day greet, upon some well-fought field

His not unworthy, not inglorious son.
 So I long hop'd, but him I never find.
 Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask.
 Let the two armies rest to-day : but I
 Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords
 To meet me, man to man : if I prevail,
 Rustum will surely hear it ; if I fall—
 Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin.
 Dim is the rumour of a common fight,
 Where host meets host, and many names are sunk :
 But of a single combat Fame speaks clear.'

He spoke : and Peran-Wisa took the hand
 Of the young man in his, and sigh'd, and said : —

' O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine !
 Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,
 And share the battle's common chance with us
 Who love thee, but must press for ever first,
 In single fight incurring single risk,
 To find a father thou hast never seen ?
 That were far best, my son, to stay with us
 Unmurmuring ; in our tents, while it is war,
 And when 'tis truce, then in Afrasiab's towus.
 But, if this one desire indeed rules all,
 To seek out Rustum—seek him not through fight :
 Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,
 O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son !
 But far hence seek him, for he is not here.
 For now it is not as when I was young,

When Rustum was in front of every fray :
 But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,
 In Seistan, with Zal, his father old.
 Whether that his own mighty strength at last
 Feels the abhorr'd approaches of old age ;
 Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.
 There go :—Thou wilt not ? Yet my heart forebodes
 Danger or death awaits thee on this field.
 Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost
 To us : fain therefore send thee hence, in peace
 To seek thy father, not seek single fights
 In vain :—but who can keep the lion's den
 From ravening ? and who govern Rustum's son ?
 Go : I will grant thee that thy heart desires.'

So said he, and dropp'd Sohrab's hand, and left
 His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay,
 And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat
 He pass'd, and tied his sandals on his feet,
 And threw a white cloak round him, and he took
 In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword ;
 And on his head he plac'd his sheep-skin cap,
 Black, glossy, curl'd, the fleece of Kara-Kul ;
 And rais'd the curtain of his tent, and call'd
 His herald to his side, and went abroad.

The sun, by this, had risen, and clear'd the fog
 From the broad Oxns and the glittering sands :
 And from their tents the Tartar horsemen fl'd
 Into the open plain ; so Haman bade ;

Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa rul'd
 The host, and still was in his lusty prime.
 From their black tents, long files of horse, they stream'd :
 As when, some grey November morn, the files,
 In marching order spread, of long-neck'd cranes,
 Stream over Casbin, and the southern slopes
 Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,
 Or some froze Caspian reed-bed, southward bound
 For the warm Persian sea-board : so they stream'd.
 The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,
 First with black sheep-skin caps and with long spears ;
 Large men, large steeds : who from Bokhara come
 And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.
 Next the more temperate Toorkmuns of the south,
 The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,
 And those from Attruck and the Caspian sands ;
 Light men, and on light steeds, who only drink
 The acid milk of camels, and their wells.
 And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came
 From far, and a more doubtful service own'd ;
 The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks
 Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards
 And close-set skull-caps ; and those wilder hordss
 Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste,
 Kalmuks and unkemp'd Kuzzaks, tribes who stray
 Nearest the pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,
 Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere.
 These all fil'd out from camp into the plain.

And on the other side the Persians form'd :
 First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seem'd,
 The Ilyats of Khorassan : and behind,
 The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,
 Marshall'd battalions bright in burnish'd steel.
 But Peran-Wisa with his herald came
 Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,
 And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks.
 And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw
 That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,
 He took his spear, and to the front he came,
 And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them where they stood.
 And the old Tartar came upon the sand
 Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said :—
 ' Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear !
 Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.
 But choose a champion from the Persian lords
 To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man '
 As, in the country, on a morn in June,
 When the dew glistens on the pearled ears,
 A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy—
 So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,
 A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran
 Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they lov'd.

But as a troop of pedlars, from Cabool,
 Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,
 That vast sky-neighborring mountain of milk snow :
 Winding so high, that, as they mount, they pass

Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,
 Chok'd by the air, and scarce can they themselves
 Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mulberries—
 In single file they move, and stop their breath,
 For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging snows—
 So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.

And to Ferood his brother chiefs came up
 To counsel : Gndurz and Zoarrah came,
 And Feraburz, who rul'd the Persian host
 Second, and was the uncle of the King :
 These came and counsell'd ; and then Gudurz said :

' Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up,
 Yet champion have we none to match this youth.
 He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
 But Rustum came last night ; aloof he sits
 And sullen, and has pitch'd his tents apart :
 Him will I seek, and carry to his ear
 The Tartar challenge, and this young man's name.
 Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.
 Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up.'

So spake he ; and Ferood stood forth and said :—
 ' Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said.
 Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man.'

He spoke ; and Peran-Wisa turn'd, and strode
 Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.
 But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,

And cross'd the camp which lay behind, and reach'd,
 Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.
 Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,
 Just pitch'd ; the high pavilion in the midst
 Was Rustum's, and his men lay camped around.
 And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and found
 Rustum : his morning meal was done, but still
 The table stood beside him, charg'd with food ;
 A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,
 And darkgreen melons ; and there Rustum sate
 Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist,
 And play'd with it ; but Gudurz came and stood
 Before him ; and he look'd, and saw him stand ;
 And with a cry sprang up, and dropp'd the bird,
 And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said :—
 ' Welcome ! these eyes could see no better sight.
 What news ? but sit down fir-t, and eat and drink.'

But Gudurz stood in the tent door, and said :—
 ' Not now : a time will come to eat and drink,
 But not to-day : to-day has other needs.
 The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze :
 For from the Tartars is a challenge brought
 To pick a champion from the Persian lords
 To fight their champion—and thou know'st his name—
 Sohrab men call him. but his birth is hid.
 O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's !
 He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart ;
 And he is young, and Iran's Chiefs are old,

Or else too weak : and all eyes turn to thee.
Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose.'

He spoke : but Rustum answer'd with a smile—
' Go to ? if Iran's Chiefs are old, then I
Am older : if the young are weak, the King
Errs strangely : for the King, for Kai Khosroo,
Himself is young, and honours younger man,
And lets the aged moulder to their graves.
Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young—
The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I.
For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame ?
For would that I myself had such a son,
And not that one slight helpless girl I have.
A son so fam'd, so brave, to send to war,
And I to tarry with the snow-hair'd Zal,
My father, whom the robber Afghans vex,
And clip his borders short, and drive his herds.
And he has none to guard his weak old age.
There would I go, and hang my armour up,
And with my great name fence that weak old man,
And spend the goodly treasures I have got,
And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,
And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings,
And with these slaughterous hands draw sword no more.'

He spoke, and smil'd ; and Gudurz made reply :—
' What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,

When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks
 Thee most of all, and thou, whom most he seeks,
 Hidest thy face ? Take heed, lest men should say,
Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,
And shuns to peril it with younger men.

And, greatly mov'd, then Rustum made reply :—
 ' O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words ?
 Thou knowest better words than this to say.

What is one more, one less, obscure or fam'd,
 Valiant or craven, young or old, to me ?
 Are not they mortal, am not I myself ?
 But who for men of nought would do great deeds ?
 Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame.
 But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms ;
 Let not men say of Rustum, he was matc'd
 In single fight with any mortal man.'

He spoke ; and frown'd ; and Gudurz turn'd, and, ran
 Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy,
 Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.
 But Rustum strode to his tent door, and call'd
 His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,
 And clad himself in steel : the arms he chose
 Were plain, and on his shield was no device,
 Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,
 And from the fluted spine atop a plume
 Of horsehair wav'd, a scarlet horsehair plume.
 So arm'd he issued forth ; and Ruksh, his horse,
 Follow'd him, like a faithful hound, at heel,

Ruksh, whose renown was nois'd through all the earth.
 The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once
 Did in Bokhara by the river find
 A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home.
 And rear'd him ; a bright bay, with lofty crest :
 Dight with a saddle-cloth of broider'd green
 Crusted with gold, and on the ground were work'd
 All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know :
 So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and cross'd
 The camp, and to the Persian host appear'd.
 And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts
 Hail'd ; but the Tartars knew not who he was.
 And dear as the wet diver to the eyes
 Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore.
 By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,
 Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,
 Having made up his tale of precious pearls,
 Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands—
 So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came.

And Rustum to the Persian front advanc'd,
 And Sohrab arm'd in Haman's tent, and came.
 And as afield the reapers cut a swathe
 Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,
 And in the midst a stubble, short and bare ;
 So on each side were squares of men, with spears
 Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand.
 And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast
 His eyes towards the Tartar tents, and saw
 Sohrab come forth, and eyed him as he came.

As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,
 Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge
 Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her fire—
 At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn,
 When the frost flowers the whiten'd window panes—
 And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts
 Of that poor drudge may be ; so Rustum ey'd
 The unknown adventurous youth, who from afar
 Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth
 All the most valiant chiefs : long he perus'd
 His spirited air, and wonder'd who he was.
 For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd ;
 Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and straight,
 Which in a queen's secluded garden throws
 Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,
 By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound—
 So slender Sohrab seemed, so softly rear'd.
 And a deep pity enter'd Rustum's soul
 As he beheld him coming ; and he stood,
 And beckon'd to him with his hand, and said :—

“ O thou young man, the air of Heaven is soft,
 And warm, and pleasant ; but the grave is cold.
 Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.
 Behold me ; I am vast, and clad in iron,
 And tried ; and I have stood on many a field
 Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe :
 Never was that field lost, or that foe sav'd.

O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death?
 Be govern'd : quit the 'Tartar host, and come
 To Iran, and be as my son to me,
 And fight beneath my banner till I die.
 There are no youths in Iran brave as thou."

So he spake, mildly : Sohrab heard his voice,
 The mighty voice of Rostum ; and he saw
 His giant figure planted on the sand,
 Sole, like some single tower, which a chief
 Had builded on the waste in former years
 Against the robbers ; and he saw that head,
 Streak'd with its first grey hairs : hope fill'd his soul ;
 And he ran forward, and embrac'd his knees,
 And clasp'd his hand within his own, and said :—

" Oh, by thy father's head ! by thine own soul !
 Art thou not Rostum ? Speak ! art thou not he !"
 But Rostum ey'd askance the kneeling youth,
 And turn'd away, and spoke to his own soul :—

" Ah me, I muse what this young fox may mean.
 False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys.
 For if I now confess this thing he asks,
 And hide it not, but say—*Rostum is here*—
 He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes.
 But he will find some pretext not to fight,
 And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts,
 A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.

And on a feast-tide, in Afrasiab's hall,
 In Samarcand, he will arise and cry—
 " I challeng'd once, when the two armies camp'd
 Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords
 To cope with me in single fight; but they
 Shrank : only Rustum dar'd : then he and I
 Changed gifts, and went on equal terms away."
 So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud.
 Then were the chiefs of Iran sham'd through me.' .

And then he turn'd, and sternly spake aloud :—
 ' Rise ! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus
 Of Rustum ? I am here, whom thou hast call'd
 By challenge forth : make good thy vaunt, or yield.
 Is it with Rustum only thou wouldst fight ?
 Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face and flee.
 For well I know, that did great Rustum stand
 Before thy face this day, and were reveal'd,
 There would be then no talk of fighting more.
 But being what I am, I tell thee this :
 Do thou record it in thine inmost soul :
 Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt, and yield ;
 Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds,
 Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer floods,
 Oxus in summer wash them all away.'
 He spoke : and Sohrab answer'd, on his feet :—
 ' Art thou so fierce ? Thou wilt not fright me so.
 I am no girl, to be made pale by words.

Yet this thou hast said well, die Rustum stand
 Here on this field, there were no fighting then
 But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.
 Begin : thou art more vast, more dread than I,
 And thou art prov'd, I know, and I am young—
 But yet Success sways with the breath of Heaven.
 And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure
 Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.
 For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,
 Pois'd on the top of a huge wave of Fate,
 Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.
 And whether it will heave us up to land,
 Or whether it will roll us out to sea,
 Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,
 We know not, and no search will make us know :
 Only the event will teach us in its hour.'

He spoke ; and Rustum answer'd not, but hurl'd
 His spear : down from the shoulder, down it came,
 As on some partridge in the corn a hawk
 That long has tower'd in the airy clouds
 Drops like a plummet : Sohrab saw it come,
 And sprang aside, quick as a flash ; the spear
 Hiss'd, and went quivering down into the sand,
 Which it sent flying wide :—then Sohrab threw
 In turn, and full struok Rustum's shield : sharp rang
 The iron plates rang sharp, but turn'd the spear .
 And Rustum seiz'd his club, which none but he

Could wield ; an unlopp'd trunk it was, and huge,
 Still rough ; like those which men in treeless plains
 To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers,
 Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up
 By their dark springs, the wind in winter-time
 Has made in Himalayan forests wrack,
 And strewn the channels with torn boughs ; so huge
 The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck
 One stroke ; but again Sohrab sprang aside
 Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came
 Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's hand.
 And Rustum follow'd his own blow, and fell
 To his knees, and with his fingers clutched the sand :
 And now might Sohrab have unsheath'd his sword.
 And pierc'd the mighty Rustum while he lay
 Dizzy, and on his knees, and chok'd with sand :
 But he look'd on, and smil'd, nor bar'd his sword,
 But courteously drew back, and spoke' and said :—

' Thou strik'st too hard ; that club of thine will float
 Upon the summer floods, and not my bones.
 But rise, and be not wroth ; not wroth am I :
 No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul.
 Thou say'st thou art not Rustum : be it so.
 Who art thou ? thou, that canst so touch my soul ?
 Boy as I am, I have seen battles too ;
 Have waded foremost in their bloody waves,
 And heard their hollow roar of dying men ;

But never was my heart thus touch'd before. -
 Are they from Heaven, these softening's of the heart ?
 O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven !
 Come, plant we here in earth our angry spears,
 And make a truce, and sit upon this sand,
 And pledge each other in red wine, like friends,
 And thou shalt talk me of Rustum's deeds.
 There are enough foes in the Persian host
 Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang ;
 Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou
 Mayst fight ; fight them, when they confront thy spear.
 But oh, let there be peace twixt thee and me !

He ceas'd : but while he spake, Rustum had risen
 And stood erect, trembling with rage ; his club
 He left to lie, but had regain'd his spear,
 Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right hand
 Blaz'd bright and baleful, like that autumn Star,
 The baleful sign of fevers ; dust had soil'd
 His stately crest, and dimm'd his glittering arms.
 His breast heav'd ; his lips foam'd ; and twice his voice
 Was choked with rage ; at last these words broke way :—

' Girl ! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands !
 Ourl'd minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words !
 Fight ; let me hear thy hateful voice no more !
 Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now
 With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to dance ;
 But on the Oxus sands, and in the dance

Of battle, and with me, who make no play
 Of war ; I fight it out, and hand to hand.
 Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine !
 Remember all thy valour : try thy feints
 And cunning : all the pity I had is gone.
 Because thou hast sham'd me before both the hosts
 With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's wiles.

He spoke ; and Sohrab kindled at his taunts,
 And he too drew his sword : at once they rush'd
 Together, as two eagles on one prey
 Come rushing down together from the clouds,
 One from the east, one from the west : their shields
 Dash'd with a clang together, and a din
 Rose, such as that the sinewy woodcutters,
 Make often in the forest's heart at morn,
 Of hewing axes, crashing trees ; such blows
 Rustum and Sohrab on each other hail'd.
 And you would say that sun and stars took part
 In that unnatural conflict ; for a cloud
 Grew suddenly in Heaven, and dark'd the sun
 Over the fighters' heads ; and a wind rose
 Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain,
 And in a sandy whirlwind wrapp'd the pair.
 In gloom they twain were wrapp'd, and they alone ;
 For both the onlooking hosts on either hand
 Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was pure,
 And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.

But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes
 And labouring breath ; first Rustum struck the shield
 Which Sohrab hold stiff ont : the steel-spiked spear
 Rent the tough plates, but fail'd to reach the skin,
 And Rustum pluck'd it back with angry groan.
 Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm,
 Nor clove its steel quite through ; but all the crest
 He shore away, and that proud horsehair plume,
 Never till now defil'd, sunk to the dust ;
 And Rustum bow'd his head ; but then the gloom
 Grew blacker : thunder rumbled in the air,
 And lightnings rent the cloud ; and Ruksh, the horse,
 Who stood at hand, utter'd a dreadful cry :
 No horse's cry was that, most like the roar
 Of some pain'd desert lion, who all day
 Has trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side,
 And comes at night to die upon the sand : —
 The two hosts heard that cry, and quak'd for fear,
 And Oxus curdled as it cross'd his stream.
 But Sohrab heard, and quail'd not, but rushed on,
 And struck again ; and again Rustum bow'd
 His head ; but this time all the blade, like glass,
 Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,
 And in his hand the hilt remain'd alone.

Then Rustum rais'd his head : his dreadful eyes
 Glar'd, and he shook on high his menacing spear,
 And shouted '*Rustum !*' Sohrab heard that shout,
 And shrank amaz'd : back he recoil'd one step,

And scann'd with blinking eyes the advancing form :
 And then he stood bewilder'd ; and he dropp'd
 His covering shield, and the spear pierced his side.
 He reel'd, and staggering back, sunk to the ground
 And then the gloom dispers'd, and the wind fell,
 And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all
 The cloud ; and the two armies saw the pair ;
 Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,
 And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.

Then, with a bitter smile Rustum began :—
 ' Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to kill
 A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse,
 And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent,
 Or else that the great Rustum would come down
 Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move
 His heart to take a gift, and let thee go.
 And then that all the Tartar host would praise
 Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy fame,
 To glad thy father in his weak old age.
 Fool ! thou art slain, and by an unknown man
 Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be,
 Than to thy friends, and to thy father old.'

And, with a fearless mien, Sohrab replied :—
 ' Unknown thou art ; yet they fierce vaunt is vain,
 Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man.
 No ! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart ;
 For were I match'd with ten men such as thou,

And I were he who till to-day I was,
 They should be lying here, I standing there,
 But that beloved name unnerv'd my arm—
 That name, and something, I confess, in thee,
 Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield,
 Fall ; and thy spear transfix'd an unarm'd foe.
 And now thou boastest, and insult'st my fate.
 But hear thou this, fierce man, tremble to hear !
 The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death !
 My father, whom I seek through all the world,
 He shall avenge my death, and punish thee !'

As when some hunter in the spring hath found
 A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,
 Upon the craggy isle of a hill lake,
 And pierc'd her with an arrow as she rose,
 And follow'd her to find her where she fell
 Far of ;—anon her mate comes winging back
 From hunting, and a great way off descries
 His huddling young left sole ; at that, he checks
 His pinion, and, with short, uneasy sweeps
 Circles above his eyry, with loud screams
 Chiding his mate back to her nest ; but she
 Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,
 In some far stony gorge out of his ken,
 A heap of fluttering feathers : never more
 Shall the lake glass her, flying over it ;
 Never the black and deep precipices
 Echo her stormy scream as she sails by :—

As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss —
 So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood
 Over his dying son, and knew him not.

But with a cold, incredulous voice, he said :—
 ‘ What part is this of fathers and revenge ?
 The mighty Rustum never had a son.’

And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied :—
 ‘ Ah yes, he had ! and that lost son am I.
 Surely the news will one day reach his ear,
 Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,
 Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here ;
 And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap
 To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee.
 Fierce man, bethink thee, for an only son !
 What will that grief, what will that vengeance be !
 Oh, could I live, till I that grief had seen !
 Yet him I pity not so much, but her,
 My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells
 With that old King, her father, who grows grey
 With age, and rules over the valiant Koords,
 Her most I pity, who no more will see
 Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,
 With spoils and honour, when the war is done,
 But a dark rumour will be bruited up,
 From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear ;
 And then will that defenceless woman learn
 That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more ;

But that in battle with a nameless foe,
By the far distant Oxus, he is slain.'

He spoke ; and as he ceas'd he wept aloud,
Thinking of her he left, and his own death.
He spoke ; but Rustum listen'd. plung'd in thought
Nor did he yet believe it was his son
Who spoke, although he call'd back names he
For he had had sure tidings that the babe,
Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,
Had been a puny girl, no boy at all :
So that sad mother sent him word, for fear
Rustum should take the boy, to train in arms ;
And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,
By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son ;
Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.
So deem'd he ; yet he listen'd, plung'd in thought ;
And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide
Of the bright rooking ocean sets to shore
At the full moon : tears gather'd in his eyes ;
For he remember'd his own early youth,
And all its bounding rapture ; as, at dawn,
The Shepherd from his mountain lodge descries
A far bright City, smitten by the sun,
Through many rolling clouds ;—so Rustum saw
His youth, saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom ;
And that old King, her father, who lov'd well
His wandering guest, and gave him his fair ohild
With joy ; and all the pleasant life they led,

They three, in that long-distant summer-time—
 The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt
 And bound, and morn on those delightful hills
 In Ader-baijan. And he saw that Youth,
 Of age and looks to be his own dear son,
 Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,
 Like some rich hyacinth, which by the scythe
 Of an unskilful gardener has been cut,
 Mowing the garden grass-plots near its bed,
 And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,
 On the mown, dying grass ;—so Sohrab lay,
 Lovely in death, upon the common sand.
 And Rustum gaz'd on him with grief and said :—

‘ O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son
 Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have lov'd !
 Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men
 Have told thee false ;—thou art not Rustum's son,
 For Rustum had no son : one child he had—
 But one—a girl ; who with her mother now
 Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us—
 Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war.’

But Sohrab answer'd him in wrath ; for now
 The anguish of the deep-fix'd spear grew fierce,
 And he desired to draw forth the steel,
 And let the blood flow free, and so to die ;
 But first he would convince his stubborn foe—
 And, rising sternly on one arm, he said :—

‘ Man, who art thou who dost deny my words ?
Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,
And Falsehood, while I liv’d, was far from mine.
I tell thee. prick’d upon this arm I bear
That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,
That she might prick it on the babe she bore.’

He spoke : and all the blood left Rustum’s cheeks ;
And his knees totter’d and he smote his hand
Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,
That the hard iron corslet clank’d aloud :
And to his heart he pressed the other hand,
And in a hollow voice he spake, and said : —

‘ Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie ;
If thou show this, then art thou Rustum’s son.’

Then with weak, hasty fingers, Sohrab loos’d
His belt, and near the shoulder bar’d his arm,
And show’d a sign in faint vermilion points
Prick’d : as a cunning workman, in Pekin,
Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,
An emperor’s gift—at early morn he paints,
And all day long, and when night comes, the lamp
Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands :—
So delicately prick’d the sign appear’d
On Sohrab’s arm, the sign of Rustum’s seal,
It was that Griffin, which of old rear’d Zal,
Rustum’s great father, whom they left to die,

A helpless babe, among the mountain rocks,
 Him that kind creature found, and rear'd, and lov'd—
 Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.
 And Sohrab bared that figure on his arm,
 And himself scann'd it long with mournful eyes,
 And then he touch'd it with his hand and said :

‘ How say'st thou ? Is that sign the proper sign
 Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's ?

He spoke : but Rustum gaz'd, and gaz'd, and stood
 Speechless, and then he utter'd one short cry—
O Boy—thy Father !—and his voice chok'd there.
 And then a dark cloud pass'd before his eyes,
 And his head swam, and he sunk down to earth.
 But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and cast
 His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his lips.
 And with fond faltering fingers strok'd his cheeks.
 Trying to call him back to life : and life
 Came back to Rustum, and he op'd his eyes,
 And they stood wide with horror ; and he seiz'd
 In both his hands the dust which lay around,
 And threw it on his head, and smirch'd his hair,
 His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms :
 And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast,
 And his sobs chok'd him ; and he clutch'd his sword,
 To draw it, and for ever let life out.
 But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands,
 And with a soothing voice he spoke, and said :—

' Father, forbear : for I but meet to day
 The doom that at my birth was written down
 In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's unconscious hand.
 Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,
 When first I saw thee ; and thy heart spoke too.
 I know it : but Fate trod those promptings down
 Under its iron heel ; Fate, Fa te engag'd
 The strife, and hurl'd me on my father's spear.
 But let us speak no more of this : I find
 My father ; let me feel that I have found.
 Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take
 My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,
 And wash them with thy tears, and say, " My son ! "
 Quick ! quick ! for number'd are my sands of life,
 And swift ; for like the lightning to this field
 I came, and like the wind I go away—
 Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind.
 But it was writ in Heaven that this should be : '

So said he : and his voice releas'd the heart
 Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth : he cast
 His arms around his son's neck, and wept aloud,
 And kiss'd him. And awe fell on both the hosts
 When they saw Rustum's grief : and Ruksh, the horse
 With his head bowing to the ground, and mane
 Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe
 First to the one then to the other mov'd
 His head, as if enquiring what their grief

Might mean ; and from his dark, compassionate eyes,
The big warm tears roll'd down, and cak'd the sand
But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said :—

‘ Ruksh, now thou grievest ; but, O Ruksh, thy feet
Should then have rotted on thy nimble joints,
When first they bore thy Master to this field.’

But Sohrab looked upon the horse and said :—
‘ Is this then Ruksh ? How often, in past days,
My mother told me of thee, thou brave steed !
My terrible father’s terrible horse ; and said,
That I should one day find thy lord and thee.
Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane.
O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I :
For thou hast gone where I shall never go,
And snuff’d the breezes of my father’s home.
And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,
And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake
Of Zirrah ; and the aged Zal himself
Has often strok’d thy neck, and given thee food,
Corn in a golden platter soak’d with wine,
And said—“ O Ruksh ! bear Rustum well ! ”—but I
‘ Have never known my grandsire’s furrow’d face,
Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,
Nor slak’d my thirst at the clear Helmund stream
But lodg’d among my father’s foes, and seen
Afrasiab’s cities only, Samarcand,
Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,

And the black Toorkmun tents ; and only drunk
 The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,
 Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,
 The nothern Sir ; and this great Oxus stream—
 The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die.'

And, with a heavy groan, Rustum replied :
 ' Oh that its waves were flowing over me,
 Oh that I saw its grains of yellow silt
 Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head ! '

And, with a grave mild voice Sohrab replied :—
 ' Desire not that, my father ; thou must live :
 For some are born to do great deeds, and live,
 As some are born to be obscur'd, and die.
 Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,
 And reap a second glory in thine age.
 Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.
 But come : thou seest this great host of men
 Which follow me ; I pray thee, slay not these :
 Let me entreat for them : what have they done ?
 They follow'd me, my hope, my fame, my star.
 Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
 But me thou must bear hence, not send with them,
 But carry me with thee to Seistan,
 And place me on a bed, and mourn for me,
 Thou, and the snow-hair'd Zal, and all thy friends.
 And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,
 And heap a stately mound above my bones,

And plant a far-seen pillar over all :
 That so the passing horseman on the waste
 May see my tomb a great way off, and say—
Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,
Whom his great father dul in ignorance kill—
 And I be not forgotten in my grave.'

And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied :—
 ' Fear not ; as thou hast said, Sohrab, my son,
 So shall it be : for I will burn my tents,
 And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me,
 And carry thee away to Seistan,
 And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee,
 With snow-headed Zal, and all my friends.
 And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,
 And heap a stately mound above thy bones,
 And plant a far seen pillar over all :
 And men shall not forget thee in thy grave.
 And I will spare thy host : yea, let them go :
 Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
 What should I do with slaying any more ?
 For would that all whom I have ever slain
 Might be once more alive ; my bitterest foes,
 And they who were call'd champions in their time,
 And through whose death I won that fame I have
 And I were nothing but a common man,
 A poor, mean soldier, and without renown ;
 So thou mightest live too, my son, my son !
 Or rather would that I, even I myself,

Might now be lying on this bloody sand,
 Near death and by an ignorant stroke of thine,
 Not thou of mine ; and I might die, not thou ;
 And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan ;
 And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine ;
 And say—*O son, I weep thee not too sore,
 For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine end.*—
 But now in blood and battles was my youth.
 And full of blood and battles is my age ;
 And I shall never end this life of blood.'

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied :—
 ' A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful man ;
 But thou shalt yet have peace ; only not now,
 Not yet : but thou shalt have it on that day,
 When thou shalt sail in a high-masted ship,
 Thou and the other peers of Kai-Khosroo,
 Returning home over the salt blue sea.'

And Rustum gaz'd on Sohrab's face and said :—
 ' Soon be that day, my son, and deep that sea !
 Till then, if fate so wills, let me endure.'

He spoke ; and Sohrab smil'd on him, and took
 The spear, and drew it from his side, and eas'd
 His wounds imperious anguish : but the blood
 Came welling from the open gash ; and life
 Flow'd with the stream : all down his cold white side
 The crimson torrent ran, dim now, and soil'd,

Like the soil'd tissue of white violets
 Left, freshly gather'd, on their native bank,
 By romping children, whom their nurses call
 From the hot fields at noon : his head droop'd low,
 His limbs grew slack ; motionless, white, he lay—
 White, with eyes clos'd ; only when heavy gasps,
 Deep, heavy gasps, quivering through all his frame,
 Convuls'd him back to life, he open'd them,
 And fix'd them feebly on his father's face :
 Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from his limbs
 Unwillingly the spirit fled away,
 Regretting the warm mansion which it left,
 And youth and bloom, and this delightful world.

So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead.
 And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak
 Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.
 As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd
 By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear
 His horse, now, 'mid their broken flights of steps,
 Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side—
 So in the sand Rustum lay by his son.

And night came down over the solemn waste,
 And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,
 And darken'd all ; and a cold fog, with night,
 Crept from the Oxns. Soon a hnm arose,
 As of a great assembly loos'd and fires
 Began to twinkle through the fog ; for now
 Both armies mov'd to camp, and took their meal :

The Persians took it on the open sands
 Southward ; the Tartars by the river marge :
 And Rustum and his son were left alone.

But the majestic river floated on,
 Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
 Into the frosty starlight, and there mov'd,
 Rejoicing, through the bush'd Chorasmlau waste,
 Under the solitary moon : he flow'd
 Right for the Polar Star, past Orgunje,
 Brimming, and bright, and large : then sands begin
 To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,
 And split his currents ; that for many a league
 The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along
 Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles—
 Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had
 In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,
 A foil'd circuitous wanderer :—till at last
 The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
 His luminous home of waters opens, bright
 And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bath'd stars
 Emerge and shine upon the Aral Sea.

MAFHEW ARNOLD.

MORTE D'ARTHUR.

(FROM "COMING AND PASSING OF ARTHUR.")

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
 Among the mountains by the winter sea ;

Until king Arthur's Table, man by man,
 Had fallen in Lyonesse about their lord,
 King Arthur : then, because his wound was deep,
 The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
 Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
 And bore him to a chapel nigh the field.
 A broken chancel with a broken cross,
 That stood on a dark strait of barren land ;
 On one side lay the ocean, and on one
 Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
 ' The sequel of to-day unsolders all
 The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
 Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
 They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
 Shall never more, at any future time,
 Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds.
 Walking about the gardens and the halls
 Of Camelot, as in the days that were,
 I perish by this people which I made,—
 Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again
 To rule once more—but let what will be, be,
 I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
 That without help I cannot last till morn.
 Thon therefore take my brand Excalibur,
 Which was my pride : for thon rememberest how
 In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
 Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful.

Holding the sword—and how I row'd across
 And took it, and have worn it, like a king :
 And, wheresoever I am sung or told
 In aftertime, this also shall be known :
 But now delay not : take Excalibur,
 And fling him far into the middle mere :
 Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word. ”

To him replied that the bold Sir Bedivere ;
 It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
 Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm.
 A little thing may harm a wounded man.
 Yet I they host will all perform at full,
 Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word.

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept
 And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
 Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
 Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
 Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
 By zig-zag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
 Came on the shining levels of the lake,

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
 And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
 Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
 And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt ;
 For all the haft twinkled with diamond studs,
 Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
 Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
 That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood.

This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw : but at the last it seem'd
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
There in the many-knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded king.

Then spake king Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
‘ Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave ?
What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast heard ?
And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
‘ I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag.’

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale :
‘ Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as becom'd
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight :
For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word.’

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
‘ Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought ;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote

His palms together, and he cried aloud,
 ‘ And if indeed I cast the brand away.
 Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
 Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,
 Which might have pleased the eyes of many men
 What good should follow this, if this were done ?
 What harm, undone ? deep harm to disobey,
 Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
 Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
 An act unprofitable, against himself ?
 The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
 What record, or what relic of my lord
 Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
 And rumours of doubt ? but were this kept,
 Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
 Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
 Saying, “ King Arthur’s sword, Excalibur,
 Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake,
 Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps.
 Upon the hidden bases of the hills.”
 So might some old man speak in the aftertime
 To all the people, winning reverence.
 But now much honour and much fame were lost.’
 So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
 And hid Excalibur the second time,
 And so strode back slow to the wounded King.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily :
 ‘ What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast heard ?

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :

‘ I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds.’

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath :
‘ Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted ! Woe is me !
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widow’d of the power in his eye
That bow’d the will. I see thee what thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious bilt :
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes,
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence ;
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands.’

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch’d the sword,
And strongly wheel’d and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirl’d in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the northern sea.
So flash’d and fell the brand Excalibur :

But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,

And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath :
' Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out : what is it thou hast heard, or seen ? '

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
' Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him ;
But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.'

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard :
' My end draws nigh ; 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight.
And bear me to the margin ; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes

As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
 Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
 And would have spoken, but he found not words.
 Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
 O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
 And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs,

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard,
 Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
 When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the King
 Muttering and murmuring at his ear ' Quick, quick !
 I fear it is too late, and I shall die.'
 But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
 Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd,
 Larger than human on the frozen hills.
 He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
 Before. His own thought drove him like a goad,
 Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
 And barren chasms, and all to left and right
 The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
 His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
 Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—
 And on a sudden, lo ! the level lake,
 And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
 Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
 Beneath them ; and descending they were ware
 That all the decks were dense with stately forms

Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
 Three Queens with crowns of gold—and from them rose
 A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
 And, as it were one voice, an agony
 Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills
 All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
 Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, ' Place me in the barge,'
 And to the barge they came, There those three
 Queens

Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
 But she, that rose the tallest of them all
 And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
 And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands,
 And call'd him by his name, complaining loud,
 And dropping bitter tears against his brow
 Stip'd with dark blood : for all his face was white
 And colourless, and like the wither'd moon
 Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east ;
 And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops
 Of onset ; and the light and lustrous curls—
 That made his forehead like a rising sun
 High from his dais-throne—were parch'd with dust ;
 Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
 Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed his lips..
 So like a shatter'd column lay the King ;
 Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
 From spur to plume a star of tournament,

Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere,
Ah ! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go ?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes ?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance,
And every chance brought out a noble knight.
Such times have been not since the light that led
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole ROUND TABLE is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world ;
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds.'

And slowly answer'd Arthur from the barge ;
' The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
Comfort thyself : what comfort is in me ?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within Himself make pure ! but thou,
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,

If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
 Both for themselves and those who call them friend ?
 For so the whole round earth is every way
 Bound by gold chains about the feet of God. .
 But now farewell. I am going a long way
 With these thou seest—if indeed I go—
 (For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
 To the island-valley of Avilion ;
 Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
 Nor ever wind blows loudly ; but it lies
 Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
 And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
 Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.'

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
 Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
 That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
 Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
 With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
 Revolving many memories, till the hull
 Looked one black dot against the verge of dawn,
 And on the mere the wailing died away.

——TENNISON.

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER.

(FROM LYRICAL BALLADS.)

PART I

It is an ancient Mariner,
 And he stoppeth one of three.
 By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
 Now wherefore stopp'st thou me ?

The Bridegroom's doors are open'd wide,
And I am next of kin :
The guests are met, the feast is set :
May'st hear the merry din.'

He holds him with his skinny hand,
' There was a ship,' quoth he.
' Hold off ! unhand me, graybeard loon !
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child :
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone :
He cannot choose but hear ;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Marinere.'

' The ship was cheer'd, the harbour clear'd,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

The sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he !
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,
 Till over the mast at noon——’
 The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
 For he heard the loud bassoon.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
 Red as a rose is she ;
 Nodding their heads before her goes
 The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast
 Yet he cannot choose but hear ;
 And thus spake on that ancient man,
 The bright-eyed Marinere.

“ And now the storm-blast came, and he
 Was tyrannous and strong :
 He struck with his o’ertaking wings,
 And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
 As who pursued with yell and blow
 Still treads the shadow of his foe,
 And forward bends his head,
 The ship drove fast, loud roar’d the blast,
 And southward aye we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,
 And it grew wondrous cold :
 And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
 As green as emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
 Did send a dismal sheen :
 Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
 The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
 The ice was all around :
 It crack'd and growl'd, and roar'd and howl'd,
 Like noises in a swound !

At length did cross an Albatross,
 Through the fog it came :
 As if it had been a Christian soul,
 We hail'd it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
 And round and round it flew.
 The ice did split with a thunder-fit :
 The helmsman steer'd us through !

And a good south wind sprung up behind ;
 The Albatross did follow,
 And every day, for food or play,
 Came to the mariners' hollo !

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
 It perch'd for vespers nine ;
 Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
 Glimmer'd the white moonshine.'

' God save thee, ancient Mariner,
 From the fiends, that plague thee thus !—
 Why look'st thou so ?'— ' With my crossbow
 I shot the Albatross.'

PART II.

‘ The Sun now rose upon the right :
 Out of the sea came he,
 Still hid in mist, and on the left
 Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind.
 But no sweet bird did follow,
 Nor any day for food or play
 Came to the mariners’ hollo !

And I had done a hellish thing,
 And it would work ’em woe :
 For all averr’d I had kill’d the bird
 That made the breeze to blow.
 Ah wretch ! said they, the bird to slay ,
 That made the breeze to blow !

Nor dim nor red, like God’s own head,
 The glorious Sun uprist :
 Then all averr’d I had kill’d the bird
 That brought the fog and mist.
 ’Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
 That bring the fog and mist.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew.
 The furrow follow’d free ;
 We were the first that ever burst
 Into that silent sea.

Down dropt the breeze, the sail dropt down-
'Twas sad as sad could be :
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea !

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion :
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink ;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot : O Christ !
That ever this should be !
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs,
Upon the slimy sea.

About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night :
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green and blue, and white.

And some in dreams assured were
Of the Spirit that plagued us so ;
Nine fathom deep he had follow'd us
From the land of mist and snow.

And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was wither'd at the root ;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

Ah ! well a-day ! what evil looks
Had I from old and young !
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.'

PART III.

' There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parch'd and glazed each eye.
A weary time ! a weary time !
How glazed each weary eye !
When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

At first it seem'd a little speck,
And then it seem'd a mist ;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist !
And still it near'd and near'd :
As if it dodged a water-sprite,
It plunged, and tack'd, and veer'd.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail ;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood !
I bit my arm, I suck'd the blood,
And cried, A sail ! a sail !

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked
Agape they heard me call :
Gramercy ! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.

See ! see ! (I cried) she tacks no more !
Hither to work us weal—
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel !

The western wave was all aflame,
The day was wellnigh done !
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad, bright Sun ;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the sun.

And straight the Sun was fleck'd with bars
(Heaven's Mother send us grace !),
As if through a dungeon-grate he peer'd
With broad and burning face.

Alas ! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears !
Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres ?

Are those her ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate ?
And is that Woman all her crew ?
Is that a Death ? and are there two ?
Is Death that Woman's mate ?

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold :
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Nightmare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

The naked hulk alongside came.
And the twain were casting dice ;
“ The game is done ! I've won ! I've won ! ”
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

The Sun's rim dips ; the stars rush out ;
At one stride comes the dark ;
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

We listen'd and look'd sideways up ;
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seem'd to sip !
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleam'd white ;

From the sails the dew did drip—
Till olomb above the eastern bar
The horned Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

One after one, by the star-dogg'd Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turn'd his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

Four times fifty living men
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan),
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropp'd down one by one.

The souls did from their bodies fly—
They fled to bliss or woe !
And every soul, it pass'd me by
Like the whizz of my crossbow !

PART IV.

' I fear thee, ancient Mariner !
I fear thy skinny hand !
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribb'd sea-sand.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye.
And thy skinny hand so brown.'—
' Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest !
This body dropt not down.

Alone, alone, all, all alone
Alone on a wide sea !
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

The many men, so beautiful !
And they all dead did lie :
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on ; and so did I.

I look'd upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away ;
I look'd upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

I look'd to heaven, and tried to pray :
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close.
And the balls like pulses beat ;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky,
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they :
The look with which they look'd on me
Had never pass'd away.

An orphan's curse would drag to hell
A spirit from on high ;
But oh ! more horrible than that
Is the curse in a dead man's eye !
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And nowhere did abide ;
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside —

Her beams bemock'd the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread ;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmed water burnt alway
A still and awful red.

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watch'd the water-snakes :
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they rear'd, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watch'd their rich attire :
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coil'd and swam ; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

O happy living things ! no tongue
Their beauty might declare :
A spring of love gush'd from my heart.
And I bless'd them unaware :
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I bless'd them unaware.

The selfsame moment I could pray :
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

PART V.

' O sleep ! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole !
To marry Queen the praise be given !
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul.

The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remain'd,
I dreamt that they were fill'd with dew :
And when I awoke, it rain'd,

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank ;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs :
I was so light—almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.

And soon I heard a roaring wind :
It did not come anear ;
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere,

The upper air burst into life ;
And a hundred fire-flags sheen ;
To and fro they were hurried about
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge ;
And the rain pour'd down from one black cloud ;
The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The Moon was at its side ;
Like waters shot from some high orag,
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

The loud wind never reach'd the ship,
Yet now the ship moved on !
Beneath the lightning and the Moon
The dead men gave a groan.

They groan'd, they stirr'd, they all uprose
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes ;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steer'd, the ship moved on ;
Yet never a breeze up-blew ;
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do :
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son
Stood by me, knee to knee :
The body and I pull'd at one rope,
But he said naught to me.'

' I fear thee, ancient Mariner ! '
' Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest :
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest ;

For when it dawn'd—they dropp'd their arms,
And cluster'd round the mast ;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
And from their bodies pass'd.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun ;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mix'd, now one by one.

Sometimes a—dropping from the sky
I heard the skylark sing ;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seem'd to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning !

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute ;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the Heavens be mute.

It ceased ; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sail'd on.
Yet never a breeze did breathe ;
Slowly and smoothly went the ship.
Moved onward from beneath.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The spirit slid : and it was he
That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

The sun, right up above the mast,
Had fix'd her to the ocean :
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion.

Then like a pawing horse let go.
She made a sudden bound :
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swoond.

How long in that same fit I lay.
I have not to declare ;
But ere my living life return'd,
I heard, and in my soul discern'd
Two voices in the air.

“ Is it he ?” quoth one, “ is this the man ?
By Him who died on cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low
The harmless Albatross.

The Spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow.”

The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew :
Quoth he, "The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do." '

PART VI.

First Voice :

' " But tell me, tell me ! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing —
What makes that ship drive on so fast ?
What is the Ocean doing ?"

Second Voice :

" Still as a slave before his lord,
The Ocean hath no blast ;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast —
If he may know which way to go ;
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see ! how graciously
She looketh down on him."

First Voice :

" But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind ? "

Second Voice :

" The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind.
Fly, brother, fly ! more high, more high !

Or we shall be belated :
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated."

I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather :
"T was night, calm nigh, the Moon was high ;
The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter :
All fix'd on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never pass'd away :
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

And now this spell was snapt : once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And look'd far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—

Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having one turn'd round, walks on,
And turns no more his head ;
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him trade.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made :
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

It raised my hair, it fann'd my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring—
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sail'd softly too :
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.

O dream of joy ! is this indeed
The lighthouse top I see ?
Is this the hill ? is this the kirk ?
Is this mine own countree ?

We drifted o'er the harbour-bar
And I with sobs did pray—
O let me be awake, my God !
Or let me sleep alway.

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn !
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the Moon.

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less
That stands above the rock :
The moonlight steep'd in silentness
The steady weathercock.

And the bay was white with silent light
Till rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came.

A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were :
I turn'd my eyes upon the deck—
O Christ ! what saw I there !

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood !
A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand :
It was a heavenly sight !
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light ;

This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
No voice ; did they impart—
No voice ; but O, the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

But soon I heard the dash of oars,
I heard the Pilot's cheer :
My head was turn'd perforce away.
And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot's bay,
I heard them coming fast :
Dear Lord in Heaven ! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

I saw a third—I heard his voice :
It is the Hermit good !
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrive my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.'

PART VII.

' This Hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea.
How loudly his sweet voice he rears !
He loves to talk with mariners
That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and moon, and eve—
He hath a cushion plump :
It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak-stump.

The skiff-boat near'd : I heard them talk,
" Why, this is strange, I trow !
Where are those lights so many and fair,
That signal made but now ? "

" Strange, by my faith ! " the Hermit said—
" And they answer'd not our cheer !
The planks look warp'd ! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere !
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were
Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along ;
When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,
That eats the she-wolf's young."

" Dear Lord ! it hath a fiendish look "—
(The Pilot made reply)
" I am a-fear'd,"—" Push on, push on ! "
Said the Hermit cheerily.

The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirr'd ;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard.

Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread :
It reach'd the ship, it split the bay ;
The ship went down like lead.

Stunn'd by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drown'd
My body lay afloat ;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
With the Pilot's boat.

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round ;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling *of* the sound.

I moved my lips—the Pilot shriek'd
And fell down in a fit ;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And pray'd where he did sit.

I took the oars : the Pilot's boy,
Who now doth crazy go,
Laugh'd loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.
“ Ha ! ha ! ” quoth he, “ full plain I see
The Devil knows how to row.”

And now, all in my own countree,
I stood on the firm land !
The Hermit stepp'd forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

“ O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man !
The Hermit cross'd his brow,
“ Say quick,” quoth he, “ I bid thee say —
What manner of man art thou ? ”

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenoh'd
With a woeful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale ;
And then it left me free.

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns :
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land ;
I have strange power of speech ;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me :
To him my tale I teach.

What loud uproar bursts from that door !
The wedding-guests are there :

But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are :
And hark, the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer !

O Wedding-Guest ! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide, wide sea :
So lonely 'twas, that God Himself
Scarce seemed there to be.

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company !—

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youth and maidens gay !

Farewell, farewell ! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest ;
He prayeth well, loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small ;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.'

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
 Whose beard with age is hoar,
 Is gone : and now the Wedding-Guest
 Turn'd from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunn'd,
 And is of sense forlorn :
 A sadder and a wiser man
 He rose the morrow morn.

S. W. COLERIDGE.

KING ROBERT OF SICILY.

(FROM TALES OF A WAYSIDE INN.)

ROBERT of Sicily, brother of Pope Urbane
 And Valmond, Emperor of Allemaine,
 Apparell'd in magnificent attire,
 With retinue of many a knight and squire,
 On St. John's eve, at Vespers, proudly sat
 And heard the priests chant the Magnificat.
 And as he listened, o'er and o'er again
 Repeated, like a burden or refrain,
 He caught the words, '*Deposuit potentes
 De sede, et exaltavit humiles*' ;
 And slowly lifting up his kingly head

He to a learned clerk beside him said,
 ' What mean these words ? ' The clerk made answer meet,
 ' He has put down the mighty from their seat,
 And has exalted them of low degree.'
 Thereat King Robert muttered scornfully,
 ' 'Tis well that such seditious words are sung
 Only by priests and in the Latin tongue ;
 For unto priests and people be it known,
 There is no power can push me from my throne ! '
 And leaning back, he yawned and fell asleep,
 Lulled by the chant monotonous and deep.

When he awoke, it was already night ;
 The church was empty, and there was no light,
 Save where the lamps, that glimmered few and faint,
 Lighted a little space before some saint.
 He started from his seat and gazed around,
 But saw no living thing and heard no sound.
 He groped towards the door, but it was locked ;
 He cried aloud, and listened, and then knocked
 And uttered awful threatenings and complaints,
 And Imprecations upon men and saints.
 The sounds re-echoed from the roof and walls
 As if dead priests were laughing in their stalls.

At length the sexton, hearing from without
 The tumult of the knocking and the shout,
 And thinking thieves were in the house of prayer,

Came with his lantern, asking - ' Who is there ? '
 Half choked with rage, King Robert fiercely said.
 ' Open : 'tis I, the King ! Art thou afraid ? '
 The frightened sexton, muttering, with a curse,
 ' This is some drunken vagabond, or worse ! '
 Turned the great key and flung the portal wide :
 A man rushed by him at a single stride,
 Haggard, half naked, without hat or cloak,
 Who neither turned, nor looked at him, nor spoke
 But leaped into the blackness of the night,
 And vanished like a spectre from his sight.
 Robert of Sicily, brother of Pope Urbane
 And Valmond, Emperor of Allemaine,
 Despoiled of his magnificent attire,
 Bareheaded, breathless, and besprent with mire,
 With sense of wrong and outrage desperate,
 Strode on and thundered at the palace gate ;
 Rushed through the courtyard, thrushing in his rage
 To right and left each seneschal and page,
 And hurried up the broad and sounding stair,
 His white face ghastly in the torches, glare.
 From hall to hall he passed with breathless speed :
 Voices and cries he heard, but did not heed,
 Until at last he reached the banquet-room,
 Blazing with light, and breathing with perfume,
 There on the dais sat another king,
 Wearing his robes, his crown, his signet-ring,
 King Robert's self in features, form, and height.

But all transfigured with angelic light !
 It was an Angel ; and his presence there
 With a divine effulgence filled the air,
 An exaltation, piercing the disguise,
 Though none the hidden Angel recognise.
 A moment speechless, motionless, amazed,
 The throneless monarch on the Angel gazed,
 Who met his look of anger and surprise
 With the divine compassion of his eyes ;
 Then said, ' Who art thou ? and why com'st thou here ? '
 To which King Robert answered with a sneer,
 ' I am the King, and come to claim my own
 From an impostor, who usurps my throne ! '
 And suddenly, at these audacious words,
 Up sprang the angry guests, and drew their swords ;
 The Angel answered, with unruffled brow,
 ' Nay, not the King, but the King's Jester, thou
 Henceforth shalt wear the bells and scalloped cape,
 And for thy counsellor shalt lead an ape ;
 Thou shalt obey my servants when they call,
 And wait upon my henchmen in the hall ! '
 Deaf to King Robert's threats and cries and prayers,
 They thrust him from the hall and down the stairs :
 A group of tittering pages ran before,
 And as they opened wide the folding-door.
 His heart failed, for he heard ; with strange alarms,
 The boisterous laughter of the men-at-arms,
 And all the vaulted chamber roar and ring
 With the mock plaudits of ' Long live the King ! '

Next morning, waking with the day's first beam,
 He said within himself, ' It was a dream ! '

But the straw rustled as he turned his head,
 There were the cap and bells beside his bed,
 Around him rose the bare, discoloured walls,
 Close by, the steeds were champing in their stalls,
 And in the corner, a revolting shape,
 Shivering and chattering sat the wretched ape,
 It was no dream ; the world he loved so much
 Had turned to dust and ashes at his touch !
 Days came and went ; and now returned again
 To Sicily the old Saturnian reign ;
 Under the Angel's governance benign
 The happy island danced with corn and wine,
 And deep within the mountain's burning breast
 Enceladus, the giant, was at rest.

Meanwhile King Robert yielded to his fate,
 Sullen and silent and disconsolate.
 Dressed in the motley garb that Jesters wear,
 With look bewildered and a vacant stare,
 Close shaven above the ears, as monks are shorn,
 By courtiers mocked, by pages laughed to scorn,
 His only friend the ape, his only food
 What others left,—he still was unsubdued.

And when the Angel met him on his way,
 And half in earnest, half in jest, would say,
 Sternly, though tenderly, that he might feel
 The velvet scabbard held a sword of steel,

‘ Art thou the King ? ’ the passion of his woe
 Burst from him in resistless overflow,
 And, lifting high his forehead, he would fling
 The haughty answer back, ‘ I am, I am the King ! ’

Almost three years were ended ; when there came
 Ambassadors of great repute and name
 From Valmond, Emperor of Allemaine,
 Unto King Robert, saying that Pope Urbane
 By letter summoned them forthwith to come
 On Holy Thursday to his city of Rome.
 The Angel with great joy received his guests,
 And gave them presents of embroidered vests,
 And velvet mantles with rich ermine lined,
 And rings and jewels of the rarest kind.
 Then he departed with them o’er the sea
 Into the lovely land of Italy,
 Whose loveliness was more resplendent made
 By the mere passing of that cavalcade,
 With plumes, and cloaks, and housings, and the stir
 Of jewelled bridle and of golden spur.
 And lo ! among the menials, in mock state.
 Upon a piebald steed, with shambling gait,
 His oloak of fox-tail flapping in the wind,
 The solemn ape demurely perched behind,
 King Robert rode, making huge merriment
 In all the country towns through which they went.

The Pope received them with great pomp and blare
 Of bannered trumpets, on Saint Peter's Square
 Giving his benediction and embrace,
 Fervent, and full of apostolic grace.
 While with congratulations and with prayers
 He entertained the Angel unawares.
 Robert, the Jester, bursting through the crowd,
 Into their presence rushed, and cried aloud,
 ' I am the King ! Look, and behold in me
 Robert, your brother, King of Sicily !
 This man, who wears my semblance to your eyes,
 Is an impostor in a king's disguise.
 Do you not know me ? does no voice within
 Answer my cry, and say we are akin ? '
 The Pope in silence, but with troubled mien,
 Gazed at the Angel's countenance serene ;
 The Emperor, laughing, said, ' It is strange sport
 To keep a madman for thy Fool at court ! '
 And the poor, baffled Jester in disgrace
 Was hustled back among the populace.

In solemn state the Holy Week went by,
 And Easter Sunday gleamed upon the sky ;
 The presence of the Angel, with its light,
 Before the sun rose, made the city bright,
 And with new fervour filled the hearts of men,
 Who felt that Christ indeed had risen again,
 Even the Jester on his bed of straw,
 With haggard eyes the unwonted splendour saw,

He felt within a power unfelt before,
 And, kneeling humbly on his chamber floor,
 He heard the rushing garments of the Lord
 Sweep through the silent air, ascending heavenward.

And now the visit ending, and once more
 Valmond returning to the Danube's shore,
 Homeward the Angel journeyed, and again
 The land was made resplendent with his train,
 Flashing along the towns of Italy
 Unto Salerno, and from thence by sea.
 And when once more within Palermo's wall,
 And, seated on the throne in his great hall,
 He heard the Angelus from convent towers.
 As if the better world conversed with ours,
 He beckoned to King Robert to draw nigher.
 And with a gesture bade the rest retire ;
 And when they were alone, the Angel said,
 ' Art thou the King ? ' Then, bowing down his head,
 King Robert crossed both hands upon his breast,
 And meekly answered him : ' Thou knowest best !
 My sins as scarlet are : let me go hence,
 And in some cloister's school of penitence,
 Across those stones, that pave the way to heaven,
 Walk barefoot, till my guilty soul be shriven !
 The Angel smiled, and from his radiant face
 A holy light illumined all the place,
 And through the open window, loud and clear,
 They heard the monks chant in the chapel near

Above the stir and tumult of the street :
 ' He has put down the mighty from their seat,
 And has exalted them of low degree ! '

And through the chant a second melody
 Rose like the throbbing of a single string :
 ' I am an Angel, and thou art the King ! '

King Robert, who was standing near the throne,
 Lifted his eyes, and lo ! he was alone !
 But all appalled as in days of old,
 With ermined mantle and with cloth of gold ;
 And when his courtiers came, they found him there
 Kneeling upon the floor, absorbed in silent prayer.

H. W. LONGFELLOW.

THE BATTLE OF FLODDEN.

(FROM MARMION.)

Even so it was. From Flodden ridge
 The Scots beheld the English host
 Leave Barmore-wood, their evening post,
 And heedful watch'd them as they cross'd
 The Till by Twisel Bridge.
 High sight it is, and haughty, while
 They dive into the deep defile ;
 Beneath the cavern'd cliff they fall,
 Beneath the castle's airy wall.

By rock, by oak, by hawthorn-tree.
Troop after troop are disappearing ;
Troop after troop their banniers rearing
Upon the eastern bank you see ;
Still pouring down the rocky den,
Where flows the sullen Till,
And rising from the dim-wood glen,
Standards on standards, men on men,
In slow succession still,
And, sweeping o'er the Gothic arch,
And pressing on, in ceaseless march,
To gain the opposing hill.
That morn, to many a trumpet clang,
Twisel ! thy rock's deep echo rang !
And many a chief of birth and rank,
Saint Helen ! at thy fountain drank.
Thy hawthorn glade, which now we see
In spring-tide bloom so lavishly,
Had then from many an axe its doom,
To give the marching columns room.

And why stands Scotland idly now,
Dark Flodden ! on thy airy brow,
Since England gains the pass the while,
And struggles through the deep defile ?
What checks the fiery soul of James ?
Why sits that champion of the dames

Inactive on his steed,
 And sees, between him and his land,
 Between him and Tweed's southern strand,
 His host Lord Surrey lead ?
 What 'vails the vain knight-errant's brand ?
 —O, Douglas, for thy leading wand !
 Fierce Randolph, for thy speed !
 O for one hour of Wallace wight
 Or well-skill'd Bruce, to rule the fight,
 And cry—' Saint Andrew and our right ! '
 Another sight had seen that morn,
 From Fate's dark book a leaf been torn,
 And Flodden had been Bannockbourne !—
 The precious hour has pass'd in vain,
 And England's host has gained the plain ;
 Wheeling their march, and circling still,
 Around the base of Flodden hill.

Ere yet the bands met Marmion's eye,
 Fitz-Rustace shouted loud and high,
 ' Hark hark ! my lord, an English drum !
 And see ascending squadrons come
 Between Tweed's river and the hill,
 Foot, horse, and cannon :—hap what hap,
 My basnet to a prentice cap,
 Lord Surrey's o'er the Till !
 Yet more ! yet more !—how far array'd
 They file from out the hawthorn shade,

And sweep so gallant by :
 With all their banners bravely spread,
 And all their armour flashing high,
 Saint George might waken from the dead,
 To see fair England's standards fly.'
 " Stint in thy prate," quoth Blount, ' thou'dst
 best,
 And listen to our lord's behest.'—
 With kindling brow Lord Marmion, said,—
 " This instant be our band array'd ;
 The river must be quickly cross'd,
 That we may join Lord Surrey's host.
 If fight King James,—as well I trust,
 That fight he will, and fight he must,—
 The Lady Clare, behind our lines
 Shall tarry, while the battle joins."

Himself he swift on horseback threw,
 Scarce to the Abbot bade adieu ;
 Far less would listen to his prayer,
 To leave behind the helpless Clare.
 Down to the Tweed his band he drew,
 And mutter'd as the flood they view,
 " The pheasant in the falcon's claw,
 He scarce will yield to please a daw :
 Lord Angus may the Abbot awe,
 So Clare shall hide with me."
 Than, on that dangerous ford, and deep,
 Where to the Tweed Leat's eddies creep,

He ventured desperately :
And not a moment will he bide,
Till squire, or groom, before him ride ;
Headmost of all he stems the tide,
And stems it gallantly.
Eustance held Clare upon her horse,
Old Hubert led her rein,
Stoutly they braved the current's course,
And though far downward driven per force,
The southern bank they gain ;
Behind them straggling, came to shore,
As best they might, the train :
Each o'er his head his yew-bow bore,
A caution not in vain ;
Deep need that day that every string.
By wet unharm'd, should sharply ring,
A moment then Lord Marmion staid,
And breathed his steed, his men array'd,
Then forward moved his band,
Until, Lord Surrey's rear-guard won,
He halted by a Cross of Stone,
That, on a hillock standing lone,
Did all the field command.

Hence might they see the full array
Of either host, for deadly fray ;
Their marshall'd lines stretch'd east and west,
And fronted north and south,

And distant salutation pass'd.

From the loud cannon mouth ;
Not in the close successive rattle,
That breathes the voice of modern battle,
But slow and far between.—

The hillock gain'd, Lord Marmion staid :

“ Here, by this Cross,” he gently said,

“ You well may view the scene,

Here shalt thou tarry, lovely Clare :

O ! think of Marmion in thy prayer !—

Thou wilt not ?—well,—no less my care

Shall, watchful, for thy weal prepare,—

You, Blount and Eustace, are her gnard,

With ten pick'd archers of my train ;

With England if the day go hard,

To Berwick speed amain.—

But if we conquer, cruel maid,

My spoils shall at your feet be laid,

When here we meet again.”

He waited not for answer there,

And would not mark the maid's despair,

Nor heed the discontented look

From either squire ; but spurr'd amain,

And, dashing through the battle plain,

His way to Surrey took.

‘——The good Lord Marmion, by my life

Welcome to danger's hour !

Short greeting serves in time of strife :—

Thus have I ranged my power ;

Myself will rule this central host,

Stout Stanley fronts their right,

My sons command the vanward post,

With Brain Tunstall, stainless knight ;

Lord Dacre, with his horsemen light,

Shall be in rearward of the fight,

And succour those that need it most.

Now, gallant Marmion, well I know,

Would gladly to the vanguard go ;

Edmund, the Admiral, Tunstall there

With thee their charge will blithely share ;

There fight thine own retainers too,

Beneath De Burg, thy steward true.”—

“ Thanks, noble Surrey !” Marmion said

Nor farther greeting there he paid ;

But, parting like a thunderbolt,

First in the vanguard made a halt,

Where such a shout there rose

Of ‘ Marmion ! Marmion ! ’ that the cry

Up Flodden mountain shrilling high,

Startled the Scottish foes.

Blount and Fitz-Eustace rested still

With Lady Clare upon the hill !

On which (for far the day was spent)

The western sunbeams now were bent.

The cry they heard, its meaning knew,

Could plain their distant comrades view ;
Sadly to Blount did Eustace say,
“ Unworthy office here to stay !
No hope of gilded spurs to-day,—
But see ! look up—on Flodden bent
The Scottish foe has fired his tent.”

And sudden, as he spoke,
From the sharp ridges of the hill,
All downward to the banks of Till,
Was wreathed in sable smoke.

Volumed and fast, and rolling far,
The cloud enveloped Scotland's war,

As down the hill they broke ;
Nor martial shout, nor minstrel tone,
Announced their march ; their tread alone,
At times one warning trumpet blown,

At times a stifled hum,
Told England, from his mountain-throne

King James did rushing come.—
Scarce could they hear or see their foes,
Until at weapon point they close.—
They close, in clouds of smoke and dust,
With sword-sway, and with lance's thrust ;

And such a yell was there,
Of sudden and portentous birth,
As if men fought upon the earth,

And fiends in upper air :
O life and death were in the shout,

Recoil and rally, charge and rout,

And triumph and despair.

Long look'd the anxious squires ; their eye

Could in the darkness nought descry.

At length the freshening western blast

Aside the shroud of battle cast ;

And, first, the ridge of mingled spears

Above the brightening cloud appears ;

And in the smoke the pennons flew,

As in the storm the white sea-new.

Then mark'd they, dashing broad and far

The broken billows of the war,

And plumed crests of chieftains brave,

Floating like foam upon the wave ;

But nought distinct they see :

Wide rag'd the battle on the plain ;

Spears shook, and falchions flash'd amain ;

Fell England's arrow-flight like rain ;

Crests rose, and stoop'd, and rose again,

Wild and disorderly.

Amid the scene of tumult high,

They saw Lord Marmion's falcon fly ;

And stainless Tunstall's banner white,

And Edmund Howard's lion bright,

Still bear them bravely in the fight ;

Although against them come,

Of gallant Gordons many a one,
 And many a stubborn Badenoch man,
 And many a rugged Border clan,
 With Huntly, and with Home.

Far on the left, unseen the while,
 Stanely broke Lennox and Argyle ;
 Though there the western mountaineer
 Rush'd with bare bosom on the spear,
 And flung the feeble targe aside,
 And with both hands the broadsword plied
 'Twas vain :—But Fortune, on the right,
 With fickle smile, cheer'd Scotland's fight.

Then fell that spotless banner white,
 The Howard's lion fell ;
 Yet still Lord Marmion's falcon flew
 With wavering flight, while fiercer grew
 Around the battle-yell.

The Border slogan rent the sky !
 A Home ! a Gordon ! was the cry :
 Loud were the clanging blows ;
 Advanc'd,—forced back,—now low, now high,
 The pennon sunk and rose ;
 As bends the bark's mast in the gale,
 When rent are rigging, shrouds, and sail,
 It waver'd 'mid the foes.

No longer Blount the view could bear ;
 " By heaven and all its saints I swear,
 I will not see it lost !

Fitz-Eustace, you with Lady Clare
May bid your beads, and patter prayer,—

I gallop to the host.^v

And to the fray he rode amain,
Follow'd by all the archer train.

The fiery youth, with desperate charge,
Made, for a space, an opening large,—

The rescued banner rose,—

But darkly closed the war around,
Like pine-tree, rooted from the ground,

It sunk among the foes.

Then Eustace mounted too :—yet staid,
As loath to leave the helpless maid,

When, fast as shaft can fly,
Blood-shot his eyes, his nostrils spread,
The loose rein dangling from his head,
Housing and saddle bloody red,

Lord Marmion's steed rush'd by ;
And Eustace maddening at the sight,
A look and sign to Clara cast

To mark he would return in haste,
Then plunged into the fight.

Ask me not what the maiden feels,

Left in that dreadful hour alone :
Perchance her reason stoops, or reels ;
Perchance a courage, not her own,
Braoes her mind to desperate tone.—

The scatter'd van of England wheels :—
She only said, as loud in air
The tumult roar'd, " Is Wilton there ? "—
They fly, or, maddened by despair,
Fight but to die,—“ Is Wilton there ? ”
With that, straight up the hill there rode
Two horsemen drench'd with gore,
And in their arms, a helpless load.
A wounded knight they bore.
His hand still strain'd the broken brand :
His arms were smear'd with blood and sand.
Dragg'd from among the horses' feet,
With dinted shield, and helmet beat,
The falcon-crest and plumage gone,
Can that be haughty Marmion !...
Young Blount his armour did unlace,
And, gazing on his ghastly face,
Said—“ By Saint George, he's gone !
That spear-wound has our master sped,—
And see, the deep cut on his head !
Good-night to Marmion.”—
“ Unnurtured Blount ! thy brawling cease :
He opes his eyes,” said Eustace : “ peace ! ”
When, doff'd his casque, he felt free air,
Around 'gan Marmion wildly stare :—
“ Where's Harry Blount ? Fitz-Eustace where ?
Linger ye here, ye hearts of hare !
Redeem my pennon,—charge again !

Cry—' Marmion to the rescue '—Vain !
 Last of my race, on battle plain
 That shout shall ne'er be heard again !—
 Yet my last thought is England's—fly,
 To Dacre bear my signet ring :
 Tell him his squadrons up to bring—
 Fitz-Eustace, to Lord Surrey hie ;
 Tunstall lies dead upon the field,
 His life-blood stains the spotless shield :
 Edmund is down :—my life is reft ;
 The Admiral alone is left.
 Let Stanley charge with spur of fire,—
 With Chester charge, and Lancashire,
 Full upon Scotland's central host,
 Or victory and England's lost,—
 Must I bid twice ?—hence, varlets ! fly !
 Leave Marmion here alone—to die." ²
 They parted, and alone he lay ;
 Clare drew her from the sight away,
 Till pain wrung forth a lowly moan,
 And half he murmur'd,—“ Is there none,
 Of all my halls have nurst,
 Page, squire, or groom, one cup to bring
 Of blessed water from the spring,
 To slake my dying thirst ! ”
 O woman ! in our hours of ease ;
 Uncertain . coy, and hard to please,
 And variable as the shade
 By the light quivering aspen made ;

When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou !--

Scarce were the pitying accents said,
When, with the Baron's casque, the maid
To the nigh streamlet ran :

Forgot were hatred, wrongs, and fears ;
The plaintive voice alone she hears,
Sees but the dying man.

She stoop'd her by the runnel's side,
But in abhorrence backward drew ;
For, oozing from the mountain's side,
Where raged the war, a dark-red tide
Was curdling in the streamlet blue.
Where shall she turn !—behold her mark
A little fountain cell,
Where water, clear as diamond-spark,
In a stone basin fell.

Above, some half-worn letters say,
Drink . weary . pilgrim . drink , and . pray .
For . the . kind . soul . of . Sybil : Gray .
Who . built . this . cross . and . well .
She fill'd the helm, and back she hied,
And with surprise and joy espied

A Monk supporting Marmion's head ;
A pious man, whom duty brought
To dubious verge of battle fought,
To shrieve the dying, bless the dead,

Deep drank Lord Marmion of the wave,
And, as she stoop'd his brow to lave—
“ Is it the hand of Clare,” he said,
“ Or injured Constance, bathes my head ? ”

Then, as remembrance rose—

“ Speak not to me of shrift or prayer !

I must redress her woes.

Short space, few words, are mine to spare ;

Forgive and listen, gentle Clare ! ”

“ Alas ! ” she said, “ the while,—

O, think of your immortal weal !

In vain for Constance is your zeal ;

She——died at Holy Isle ”

Lord Marmion started from the ground,

As light as if he felt no wound ;

Though in the action burst the tide,

In torrents from his wounded side.

“ Then it was truth, ” —he said—“ I knew

That the dark presage must be true.—

I would the Fiend, to whom belongs

The vengeance due to all her wrongs,

Would spare me but a day !

For wasting fire, and dying groan,

And priests slain on the altar-stone,

Might bribe him for delay,

It may not be !—This dizzy trance—

Curse on yon base marauder's lance,

And doubly cursed my failing brand !

A sinful heart makes feeble hand."
Then, fainting down on earth he sunk,
Supported by the trembling Monk.
With fruitless labour, Clare bound.
And strove to stanch the gushing wound
The Monk, with unavailing cares,
Exhausted all the Church's prayer.
Ever, he said, that close and near.
A lady's voice was in his ear.
And that the priest he could not hear.

For that she ever sung,
“ *In the lost battle borne down by the flying,
Where mingles war's rattle with groans of the dying!* ”

So the notes rung :—

“ Avoid thee, Fiend !—with cruel hand.
Shake not the dying sinner's sand !—
O, look, my son, upon you sign
Of the Redeemer's grace divine :

O, think on faith and bliss !—
By many a death-bed I have been.
And many a sinner's parting seen,
But never aught like this.”

The war, that for a space did fail,
Now trebly thundering swell'd the gale.

And—STANLEY ! was the cry ;
A light on Marmion's visage spread,
And fired his glazing eye ;
With dying hand, above his head,

He shook the fragment of his blade,
And shouted " Victory !—
Charge, Chester, charge ! On, Stanley, on ! "
Were the last words of Marmion.

By this, though deep the evening fell,
Still rose the battle's deadly swell,
For still the Scots, around their King,
Unbroken, fought in desperate ring.
Where's now their victor vaward wing.

Where Huntly, and where Home ?—
O for a blast of that dread horn,
On Fontarabian echoes borne,
That to King Charles did come,
When Rowland brave, and Olivier,
And every paladin and peer,
On Roncesvalles died !

Such blast might warn them, not in vain,
To quit the plunder of the slain,
And turn the doubtful day again,
While yet on Flodden side,
Afar, the Royal Standard flies,
And round it toils, and bleeds, and dies,
Our Caledonian pride !

In vain the wish—for far away,
While spoil and havoc mark their way,
Near Sybil's Cross the plunderers stray,—
" O Lady," cried the Monk, " away ! "
And placed her on her steed,

And led her to the chapel fair,
Of Tillmouth upon Tweed.
There all the night they spent in prayer,
And at the dawn of morning there
She met her kinsman, Lord Fitz-Claire.

But as they left the dark'ning heath.
More desperate grew the strife of death.
The English shafts in volleys hail'd.
In headlong charge their horse assail'd :
Front, flank, and rear, the squadrons sweep
To break the Scottish circle deep.

That fought around their King
But yet, though thick the shafts as now,
Though charging knights like whirlwinds go,
Though billmen pay the ghastly blow,
Unbroken was the ring :

The stubborn spearmen still made good
Their dark impenetrable wood.
Each stepping where his comrade stood.

The instant that he fell.
No thought was there of dastard flight ;
Link'd in the serried phalanx tight,
Groom fought like noble, squire like knight,
As fearlessly and well :
Till utter darkness closed her wing
O'er their thin host and wounded King.

Then skilful Surrey's sage commands
Led back from strife his shatter'd hands ;
And from the charge they drew,
As mountain-waves, from wasted lands,
Sweep back to ocean blue.
Then did their loss his foemen know :
Their King, their Lords, their mightiest low.
They melted from the field as snow,
When streams are swoln and south winds blow
Dissolves in silent dew.
Twee'd echoes heard the ceaseless plash,
While many a broken band,
Disorder'd through her current dash,
To gain the Scottish land ;
To town and tower, to down and dale.
To tell red Flodden's dismal tale.
And raise the universal wail.
Tradition, legend, and song,
Shall many an age that wail prolong :
Still from the sire the son shall hear
Of the stern strife, and carnage drear,
Of Flodden's fatal field,
Where shiver'd was fair Scotland's spear
And broken was her shield !
Day dawns upon the mountain's side :
There, Scotland ! lay thy bravest pride,
Chiefs, knights, and nobles, many a one :
The sad survivors all are gone.—

View not that corpse mistrustfully,
Defaced and mangled though it be :
Nor to yon Border castle high,
Look northward with upbraiding eye :
Nor cherish hope in vain,
That, journeying far on foreign strand.
The Royal pilgrim to his land

May yet return again.
He saw the wreck his rashness wrought ;
Reckless of life, he desperate fought,
And fell on Flodden plain :
And well in death his trusty brand,
Firm clench'd within his manly hand,
Beseem'd the Monarch slain.

W. SCOTT.

THE HERMIT.

(FROM 'THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD.')

“ TURN, gentle Hermit of the dale,
And guide my lonely way,
To where yon taper cheers the vale,
With hospitable ray.

‘ For here forlorn and lost I tread,
With fainting steps and slow ;
Where wilds immeasurably spread,
Seem length’ning as I go.’

‘ Forbear, my son,’ the Hermit ories,
 ‘ To tempt the dangerous gloom ;
For yonder faithless phantom flies
 To lure thee to thy doom.

‘ Here to the houseless child of want
 My door is open still ;
And though my portion is but scant,
 I give it with good will.

‘ Then turn to-night, and freely share
 Whate’er my cell bestows ;
My rushy couch and frugal fare,
 My blessing and repose.

‘ No flock that range the valley free,
 To laughter I condemn ;
Taught by that Power that pities me
 I learn to pity them :

‘ But from the mountain’s grassy side
 A guiltless feast I bring ;
A scep with herbs and fruits supply’d,
 And water from the spring.

‘ Then, pilgrim, turn, thy cares forego ;
 All earth-born cares are wrong ;
Man wants but little here below,
 Nor wants that little long.’

Soft as the dew from heaven descends,
His gentle accents fell :
The modest stranger lowly bends,
And follows to the cell.

Far in the wilderness obscure
The lonely mansion lay,
A refuge to the neighb'ring poor
And strangers led astray.

No stores beneath its humble thatch
Requir'd a master's care ;
The wicket, op'ning with a latch.
Receiv'd the harmless pair.

And now, when busy crowds retire
To take their ev'ning rest,
The Hermit trimm'd his little fire,
And cheer'd his pensive guest :

And spread his vegetable store,
And gaily press'd, and smiled :
And skill'd in legendary lore
The ling'ring hours beguil'd

Around in sympathetic mirth
Its tricks the kitten tries,
The cricket chirrups in the hearth,
The crackling faggot flies.

But nothing could a charm impart
To soothe the stranger's woe ;
For grief was heavy at his heart,
And tears began to flow.

His rising cares the Hermit spy'd.
With answ'ring care oppress :
' And whence, unhappy youth,' he cry'd,
' The sorrows of thy breast ?

' From better habitations spurn'd
Reluctant dost thou rove ?
Or grieve for friendship unreturn'd,
Or unregarded love ?

' Alas ! the joys that fortune brings,
Are trifling, and decay ;
And those who prize the paltry things,
More trifling still than they.

' And what is friendship but a name.
A charm that lulls to sleep ;
A shade that follows wealth or fame,
But leaves the wretch to weep ?

' And love is still an emptier sound
The modern fair-one's jest :
On earth unseen, or only found
To warm the turtle's nest.

‘ For shame, fond youth, thy sorrows hush
And spurn the vex.’ he said :
But while he spoke, a rising blush
His love-lorn guest betray’d.

Surpris’d he sees new beauties rise,
Swift mantling to the view ;
Like colours o’er the morning skies,
As bright, as transient too.

The bashful look, the rising breast.
Alternate spread alarms :
The lonely stranger stands confest
A maid in all her charms.

‘ And, Ah ! forgive a stranger rude,
A wretch forlorn’ she cry’d ;
‘ Whose feet unhallow’d thus intrude
Where Heav’n and you reside.

‘ But let a maid thy pity share,
Whom love has taught to stray :
Who seeks for rest, but finds despair
Companion of her way.

‘ My father liv’d beside the Tyne,
A wealthy lord was he :
And all his wealth was mark’d as mine,
He had but only me.

‘ To win me from his tender arms,
Unnumber’d suitors came,
Who prais’d me for imputed charms,
And felt, or feign’d a flame.

‘ Each hour a mercenary crowd
‘ With richest proffers strove ;
Amongst the rest young Edwin bow’d
But never talk’d of love.

‘ In humble, simplest habit clad,
No wealth nor power had he ;
Wisdom and worth were all he had.
But these were all to me.

‘ And when, beside me in the dale,
He carol’d lays of love.
His breath lent fragrance to the gale.
And music to the grove.

‘ The blossom opening to the day,
The dews of Heav’n refin’d,
Could nought of purity display
To emulate his mind.

‘ The dew, the blossom on the tree,
With charms inconstant shine ;
Their charms were his, but woe to me,
Their constancy was mine.

For still I try'd each fickle art,
 Importunate and vain :
And while his passion touch'd my heart
 I triumph'd in his pain.

' Till quite dejected with my scorn,
 He left me to my pride ;
And sought a solitude forlorn,
 In secret where he died.

' But mine the sorrow, mine the fault,
 And well my life shall pay :
I'll seek the solitude he sought,
 And stretch me where he lay.
And there forlorn, despairing hid,
 I'll lay me down and die :
'Twas so for me that Edwin did,
' And so for him will I.'

' Forbid it, Heav'n !' the Hermit cry'd,
 And clasp'd her to his breast :
The wond'ring fair once turn'd to chide,—
 'Twas Edwin's self that press'd

Turn, Angelina, ever dear,
 My charmer, turn to see
Thy own, thy long-lost Edwin here,
 Restor'd to love and thee.

Thus let me hold thee to my heart,

And every care resign ·

And shall we never, never part.

My life,—my all that's mine ?

· No never from this hour to part,

We'll live and love so true ;

The sigh that rends thy constant heart,

Shall break thy Edwin's too.'

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

